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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9447
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2113
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0202
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0214
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0693
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0502
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0209
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0370
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2508
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1891
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000480

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KG](#)
SUBJECT: BISHKEK CALM, BUT ACCUSATIONS FLY OVER
DEMONSTRATION

REF: BISHKEK 454

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Classified By: Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The center of Bishkek has remained calm since the anti-government demonstration ended abruptly the night of April 19 (reftel), and demonstrators have not returned to Ala-Too Square. The opposition and the government have accused each other of provoking the confrontation that led police to clear the square of protesters, yurts, and tents. Police detained a number of people for disorderly conduct, and the opposition claims that more than 100 opposition supporters remain in custody. A human rights NGO told us that, although 147 demonstrators were arrested between April 12 and 19, all have been released. The security services have reportedly detained United Front leaders Omurbek Suvanaliyev and Omurbek Abdrakhmanov for three days for questioning. Meanwhile, parliamentary by-elections in two districts are set for April 29, with ex-President Akayev's daughter, Bermet, standing in Kemin, although she faces legal challenges. In a positive development, opposition newspaper Kyrgyz Rukhu re-appeared in print on April 24, including articles that were to have been published in the issue confiscated by security personnel on April 20. END SUMMARY.

ALL RELATIVELY QUIET, DESPITE OPPOSITION ACCUSATIONS

12. (C) The abrupt end to the nine-day opposition demonstrations in Bishkek on April 20 has brought about little change in the capital, as the opposition and government have settled back into their respective corners. Opposition leaders Felix Kulov and MP Temir Sariyev have accused the government of harassing their supporters and detaining opposition members without cause. In an interview

conducted in his home village of Baitik on April 23, Kulov claimed that the United Front was not to blame for the attempted raid on the Kyrgyz White House, instead accusing an "unknown" group of assailants that he had no control over. Kulov also said that the opposition would continue peaceful actions in support of their demands for reform, and would maintain their appeal for the release of opposition leaders Omurbek Suvanaliyev and Omurbek Abdarahmanov from government custody. Separately, another United Front leader told Azattyk news that over 100 opposition supporters have been detained, claiming that more are taken in each day. Human Rights NGO "Civic Society Against Corruption" told us that, although 147 demonstrators were arrested, "beaten and intimidated" between April 12 and 19 for "assembling without authorization," they were all released.

13. (U) Newman Holding Company -- a local pharmaceutical importer and distributor, owned by opposition MP Osmonbek Artykbayev -- was raided by police on April 23, reportedly sanctioned by Prosecutor General Elmurza Satibaldiyev and Chief of the Bishkek City Police Molmodusa Kongantiyev. Law enforcement officials claim that the company was under suspicion of selling "contraband" pharmaceuticals. Immediately following the incursion, several MPs -- including Artykbayev, Sariyev, Urmanaliyev, and others -- protested the raid. On April 24, Kongantiyev apologized publicly for their actions, admitting that police officers acted "rudely" during the raid.

RE-START THE PRESSES

14. (C) Kyrgyz language opposition newspaper Kyrgyz Rukhu restarted publication April 24, including articles from the confiscated April 20 edition. The Chief Editor of Agym --

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the other Kyrgyz language opposition newspaper shut down by law enforcement and security officers on April 20 -- appeared on television April 23, criticizing the government for its actions, and vowing to continue to be a source of "contrarian" news. As of April 24, Agym had not re-appeared in print, and we understand that Agym has decided to take a break until May 5 to reconsider its strategy. Thus far, no further actions have been taken against either newspaper.

15. (C) The Ambassador has continued to raise with government officials our concerns about the raid on the printing press. On April 23, she spoke with Minister of Justice Kaiypov, who promised to "look into" the matter. An MFA official also seemed surprised, disavowing any knowledge of the April 20 events. The Ambassador has requested a range of meetings with government officials to deliver our points on freedom of the press. However, government officials are currently pre-occupied with the April 26-27 visit to Bishkek of Kazakh President Nazarbayev, and substantive meetings are not likely before April 30.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM: FULL STEAM AHEAD?

16. (SBU) According to AKIpress, PM Almaz Atambayev's draft of the constitution has been forwarded to the fully formed Constitutional Court for further deliberation. According to unconfirmed press reports, sources inside the White House claim that the PM's working group has implemented certain recommendations made by the opposition into the draft. While no timeline has been set for the adoption of a new constitution, the Court is obligated by law to render its opinion within six months, with the draft then going to parliament for further review.

BERMET AKAYEVA: IN THE RUNNING?

17. (U) Parliamentary by-elections are scheduled for April 29

in two districts. Bermet Akayeva, the daughter of ex-President Askar Akayev, is possibly standing in Kemin, the Akayevs' home district. Bermet received a positive court ruling April 24, upholding her candidacy as a contender for the April 29 parliamentary by-elections. However, the Kemin district court issued another ruling against her by the afternoon of April 24, putting her candidacy in question. Akayeva's potential opponents had previously filed a lawsuit against her, with accusations of bribery and a failure to meet local residency requirements. (NOTE: Bermet Akayeva has not been regularly resident in Kyrgyzstan since March 2005. END NOTE.) The Kemin district court initially overruled those claims, following a thirteen-hour deliberation that ran to 5:00 am April 24. During that time, 2,000 people reportedly demonstrated in front of the court, charging that the court remained under pressure from authorities.

COMMENT

18. (C) With the demonstrators off of Ala-Too Square, the tension that was palpable last week has dropped, and Bishkek seems relatively calm. We are confident, however, that back-room negotiations involving the key players are still going on. Publicly, each side continues to blame the other for instigating the conflict that led to the swift clearing of the square on April 19. It does appear that it was a small group in the crowd that started throwing rocks and sticks and attempted to rush the fence at the Kyrgyz White House, but it is not clear whether these "provocateurs" were opposition supporters or outsiders.

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19. (C) We remain concerned about the April 20 raid on the Media Support Center printing press, and we will continue to highlight our concerns in government meetings. The re-appearance of Kyrgyz Rukhu, however, is possibly a sign that the Kyrgyz government realizes that it crossed the line when security officials raided the printing press. Post plans to host a May 3 Media Freedom Day reception at the printing press, inviting journalists, government officials, and pundits. We will see who from the government shows up.

YOVANOVITCH